

UNDER THE GUN 3

WESTWALL

GERMAN ARMOUR IN THE WEST, 1945

DENNIS OLIVER



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ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLAUDIO FERNÁNDEZ

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Front cover: *Pzkf VI Tiger I. 4 Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 506. Belgium, January 1945.* Raised from Panzer-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 500 in July 1944 as Panzer Kompanie Hummel, this unit was incorporated into schwere Panzer-Abteilung 506 as its fourth company in December 1944 in time to take part in the Ardennes Offensive. The vehicle shown here was destroyed by its crew with two Tiger II tanks of the battalion near Oberwampach, northeast of Bastogne on 17 January 1945.



Left: An Sdkfz 251/22 ausf D half-track of 11.Panzer-Division. This vehicle is also shown and discussed in the colour illustrations on the outside back cover. (NARA). Right: A Panzerjäger V Jagdpanther knocked out in northern Germany by Canadian troops in March, 1945 possibly from schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 519 which was attached to 1.Armei in March or I Abteilung, Panzer Regiment 130 of the Panzer-Lehr-Division which had 15 of these vehicles and was operating against the Canadians at that time. (National Archives of Canada)

On Saturday 21 October 1944, Aachen - the burial place of Charlemagne, the city where the rulers of the Holy Roman Empire were crowned - became the first German town to fall to the western Allies. Between the end of July and the beginning of September 1944, the US, British and Canadian armies had broken through the German lines in Normandy and advanced at a heady pace, reaching the Seine a full eleven days before their most optimistic expectations. The German commanders had pinned their hopes on containing and then destroying the Allied enclave in Normandy, forbidden as they were to conduct any kind of withdrawal. When the German defences finally broke, they had neither the reserves to fill the gap nor prepared positions to fall back to west of the Rhine. Worse, an orderly retreat was no longer a possibility and almost 50,000 German soldiers were taken prisoner during this period - while some 10,000 of their comrades lay dead in Normandy. The largest natural barrier between the invasion beaches and the borders of the Reich - the River Seine - proved to be just as problematic to the retreating units of the Wehrmacht and most of the tanks and other vehicles that survived the Normandy battles were abandoned on its western side. Pressuring the Germans even further, a combined Franco-American force had landed in the south of France on 15 August and by mid-September had managed to link up with the US 3rd Army creating a wall of Allied armies that ranged from Antwerp to the Swiss border. British and American commanders openly talked of a peace in time for Christmas.

And then the Allied advance stopped. Although their headlong rush through France and the Low Countries had been spectacularly successful they had failed to capture a port of any significance meaning that all supplies had to be transported by road from Normandy. In addition, the troops were simply exhausted.

In September an ambitious operation to restart the Allied offensive and capture a crossing of the Rhine - Operation Market Garden - was blunted by a German force based around II SS-Panzerkorps which was at least partially rested and re-equipped. One important consequence of the failure of Market Garden had been a renewal of confidence among the soldiers of the Wehrmacht, reigniting their faith that Germany was far from defeated. And indeed, the headlong retreat was over and the Germans were now falling back on strong, prepared positions. In October Heeresgruppe B, by now reduced to a number of ad hoc battle groups, held out against two US armies in the Hürtgen Forest and although Aachen fell, it was at enormous cost to the Americans. The Allied attempts to seize the Roer dams before the onset of winter were no more successful and the Germans considered this series of battles to have been a serious defeat for the Allies. Any setback however, could at best be only temporary.

On the morning of 16 December the Germans launched a powerful armoured offensive in the Ardennes - codenamed Wacht am Rhein - catching the Allies completely by surprise, the main weight of the offensive falling on a single US Army corps. In scenes reminiscent of the Blitzkrieg, two panzer armies were able to push aside the initially weak defence and drive westward towards Antwerp in an attempt to split the British and Americans. However, within days massive Allied reinforcements were able to halt the Germans short of their main objective, the River Meuse.

Although no longer capable of advancing, the Germans managed to hold many of their gains well into 1945. A table giving the numbers for fully-tracked armoured fighting vehicles on hand in December can be seen on page 3. On New Year's Eve, while Wacht am Rhein was underway, the Germans managed to mount another offensive south of the Ardennes codename Nordwind. This attack also enjoyed some initial successes but petered out by 31 January.

Although the Ardennes Offensive had not achieved any of its major objectives, the sudden appearance of so many well equipped and highly motivated enemy troops had proven to the Allies that the Germans were still capable of surprising them, and indeed highlighted a failure of Allied intelligence that began as early as Normandy when the difficulty of operating in the Bocage country had not been foreseen.

In January 1945, the western Allies stood on the borders of the Reich and the last major natural barrier - the Rhine - lay before them. If their failure to capture a crossing during Market Garden had boosted the confidence of the Germans, the offensives of December had shown that although victory was assured, it would be a very bloody affair indeed and that the war may drag on well into the new year.

By mid February the British and Canadians had captured Cleve, Goch and Calcar and by the first week of March the Americans had taken Cologne. In what proved to be a great surprise to both sides, the Ludendorf Bridge over the Rhine at Remagen was captured intact on 7 March.

Incredibly, many of the major German armoured formations were still intact and new units were either being planned or actually raised from training and replacement battalions. Many of these however never materialised and those that did were little more than ad hoc battle groups. Typical of these late war units was Panzer-Division Clausewitz and a detailed order of battle is given on page 33.

In late March the British crossed the Rhine at Wesel preceded by the last large paratroop drop of the war in Europe. The ground troops had no difficulty in linking up with the paratroops and by nightfall of the first day all the crossing points were secured. At almost the same time the Americans crossed the river near Oppenheim. By the end of the month the important towns of Darmstadt and Wiesbaden were in allied hands and US Army units were closing on Frankfurt-am-main encircling approximately 325,000 German troops, the remains of Heeresgruppe B and parts of Heeresgruppe A, in what was to become known as the Ruhr pocket. Fighting doggedly the last German units held out until 21 April.

Late on Wednesday 11 April, US troops reached the River Elbe just 50 miles from Berlin. This was the agreed limit of the western Allied advance and while the British in the north pressed forward, US and French forces turned south towards what was fully expected to be the German's final stand - the Alpenfestung. Indeed, the spectre of a German last ditch defence, commanded personally by Hitler and conducted by fanatical, elite units in the mountainous regions of Germany and Austria was given so much credence by the Allies that the US drive into Czechoslovakia was undertaken, in large part, to prevent German troops withdrawing into the Alpine Redoubt.

The death of Adolf Hitler on 30 April provided the catalyst for surrender - at least in the West - and on 4 May, the German command began negotiations with the British. Just three days later on Monday 7 May, General Jodl signed the instrument of unconditional surrender directing all German units to cease operations at midnight on the following day. The war was over.

The images reproduced in this book were all taken in the last few desperate months of the war. Captured on film by official Allied photographers, they allow us to see exactly how these vehicles appeared in combat - many being made just hours or days after they were captured or disabled. Inevitably, some photographs depict the unfortunate casualties of war and readers are reminded that the decision to include them was not taken lightly - the alternative being to ignore the realities of our subject matter.



Photographed in La Bourgogne on 15 November 1944 this Sdkfz 251/21 Drilling was destroyed by artillery units of the US 3rd Infantry Division. The gunner's protective shield, the sight and the breech of the right hand gun can be seen behind the additional armour on the hull side. Another gun would be directly below the site and it would appear that the left hand gun is missing. These vehicles utilised the large quantity of 1.5cm MG 151/15 or the 2cm 151/20 guns which were no longer required by the Luftwaffe. The three guns were fixed to a pedestal bolted to the floor of the crew compartment which also carried an ammunition container for each gun. This half-track shows several features indicative of late production models including the Bosch headlight and the late style road wheels with a metal ring over the hub. (NARA)



At left: The Panzer Assault Badge , this version awarded to tank crews who had taken part in 100 armoured actions. Larger than the original Panzerkampfabzeichen - an example of which can be seen on page 30 - these badges were finished to a high standard with the wreath in gilt and the centre silvered. Behind the badge is a postcard suggesting that boys of the Hitler Youth should volunteer for the armed forces. (Author's collection). Below: An RSO/03 captured intact with its 10.5cm leFH18M howitzer. Apart from the obvious modification of a simpler, straight sided cab, these vehicles were powered by a Deutz diesel engine which replaced the Steyr V8 engine used for the RSO/01. (NARA)



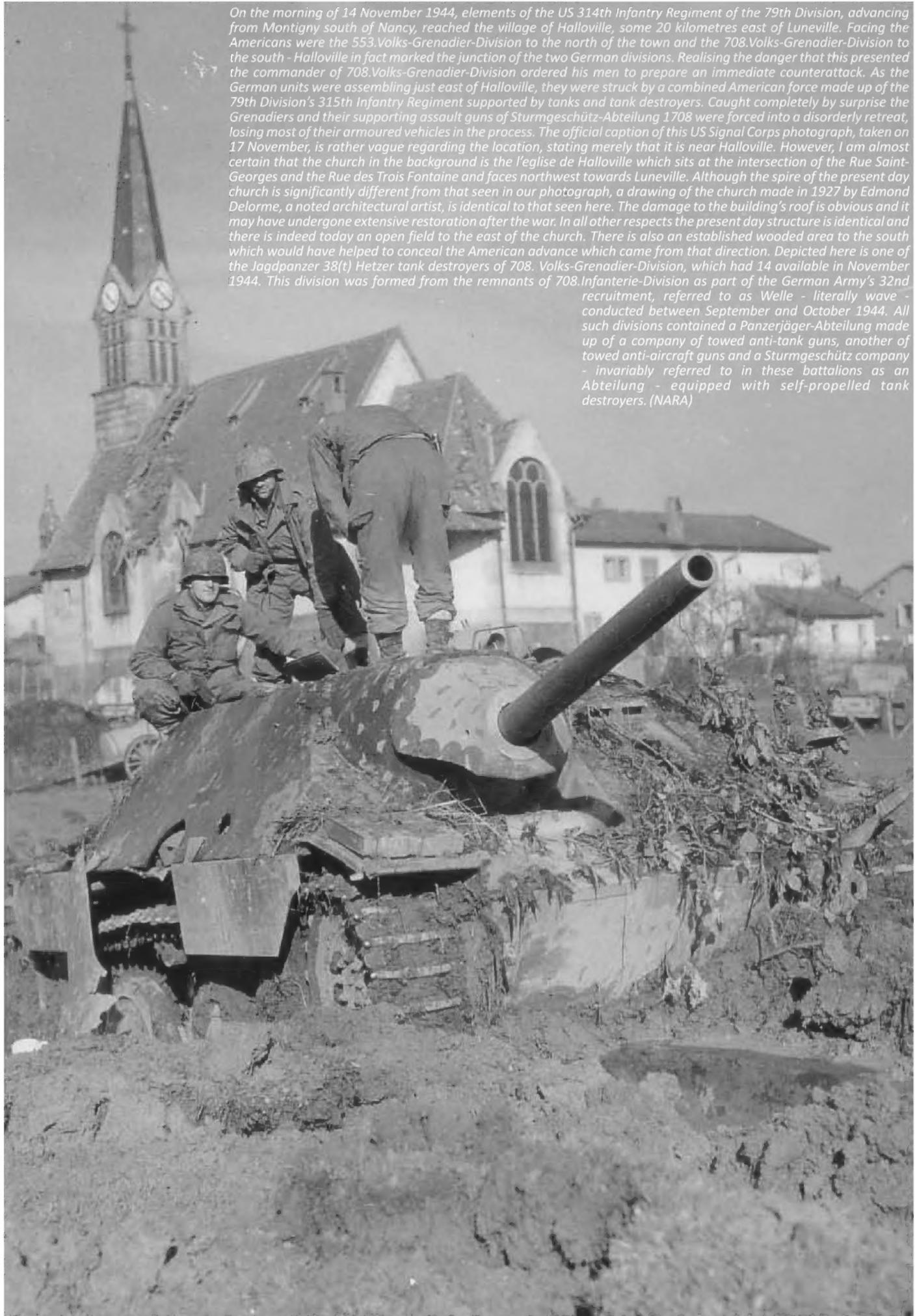
PANZERS IN THE WEST - DECEMBER 1944

The table below was compiled from several sources including unit histories and gives the strength of tank, anti-tank and assault gun units prior to the Ardennes Offensive. Note that only fully tracked vehicles are shown.

	Panzer III	PzBeoWag III	Bergepanzer III	Panzer IV	PzBeoWag IV	Bergepanzer IV	Pz IV/70 A	Pz IV/70 V	Jagdpanzer IV	Mobelwagen	Wirbelwind	Flakpanzer 38	Panther	Bergepanther	Jagdpanther	Sturmpanzer	Tiger I	Tiger II	Heizer	Nashorn	Marder III	StuG III	StuG IV	StuH 42	
2.Panzer-Division			28			3*	37	4	3	64										24		(1)			
9.Panzer-Division			28					4	4	57												(2)			
Panzer-Artillerie Regt 102	2			2																			14		
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 50							14	9																	
11.Panzer-Division			31						7	8	47	4												(3)	
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 61									14																
21.Panzer-Division			34							3	5	38													(4)
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 200	1								1																
116.Panzer-Division			21							3	41														(5)
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 228	1						11			4	3	30	2												
Panzer-Lehr-Division			27																						
3.Panzergrenadier-Division	1*	2*																			41		(6)		
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 3							17			2											7				(7)
15.Panzergrenadier-Division	1*	14																				30			
Panzer-Abteilung 115																						2			
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 33																									
25.Panzergrenadier-Division		1						6	5	37		11													(8)
Panzer-Brigade 103																									
II/Panzer Regiment 2		6					11																		
Panzer-Brigade 106																									
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 2106	2							4	4		10														5
Panzer-Brigade 150																									
Kampfgruppe X												5													
Kampfgruppe Y																									
Führer-Begleit-Brigade																									
Panzer Regiment FBB	2	17					5		4	4															
II/Panzer Regiment GD		7					38																		
Panzerjäger-Abteilung 673																					5				
Panzer-Artillerie Regt 120		5																							
Führer-Grenadier-Brigade																					11				
II/Führer-Grenadier-Brigade		8																							
III/Führer-Grenadier-Brigade								12	4	37	2										1*	(9)			
1.SS-Panzer-Division																									
SS-Panzer Regiment 1		37							4	4	42										45				
Schwere-SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501																									
2.SS-Panzer-Division		28							4	4	58										28				
9.SS-Panzer-Division		32							8		33										28		(10)		
10.SS-Panzer-Division		2					10	3	8		10	1												(11)	
12.SS-Panzer-Division		37									41														
17.SS-Panzergrenadier-Division		1								6											17		(12)		
Panzer-Abteilung (Fkl) 301										2		27													
Panzer-Kompanie (Fkl) 319																					5				
Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 506																	42								(13)
Panzer-Komp (Flamm) 352																		10							
Panzer-Komp (Flamm) 353																		10							
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 93																		12							
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 519								9			4										10				
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 525																					10				
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 559		3					18		4	3															
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 560		3					31		4		1	4													
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 654											1	20													
Schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 655								31			1	9													
Heeres Panzerjäger-Abteilung 741																		12							
Sturm-Mörser Komp. 1000												4													(14)
Sturm-Mörser Komp. 1001												4													(15)
Stug-Abteilung 200		2																			22		9 (16)		
Stug-Abteilung 243																					23		12		
Stug-Abteilung 244																					14				
Stug-Abteilung 280																					17		(17)		
Stug-Abteilung 341																					10		10 (18)		
Stug-Abteilung 905																					9		(19)		
Stug-Abteilung 911		2																			34		(20)		

(1)*Received during December. (2)3 Panther and 14 StuG were in transit on 14.12.44. (3)30 Panzer IV and 37 Panthers were in transit on 14.12.44. (4)5 Panzer IV, 23 Panthers and 14 StuG were in transit on 16.12.44. (5)10 Panzer IV and 10 Panther were in transit on 8.12.44. (6)*Both these vehicles were Befehlspanzer. (7)*Befehlspanzer. (8)30 Panthers were in transit on 14.12.44. (9)*Received during December. (10)25 Panthers were in transit on 8.12.44. (11)34 Panzer IV and 25 Panthers were in transit on 8.12.44. (12)23 StuG III and 19 StuG IV on hand at the end of December. (13)6 Tigers were in transit on 10.12.44. (14)Some sources give 3 vehicles only. (15)Some sources give 3 vehicles only. (16)The correct title was Sturmgeschütz-Ersatz und Ausbildung-Abteilung 200. (17)12 StuH 42 had been on hand the previous month and it is likely that some at least were available in December. (18)5 StuG III and 7 StuH 42 in repair 16.12.44. (19)Renamed Heeres Sturmartillerie-Brigade 905 in late 1944. (20)Attached to the Führer-Grenadier-Brigade.

On the morning of 14 November 1944, elements of the US 314th Infantry Regiment of the 79th Division, advancing from Montigny south of Nancy, reached the village of Halloville, some 20 kilometres east of Luneville. Facing the Americans were the 553.Volks-Grenadier-Division to the north of the town and the 708.Volks-Grenadier-Division to the south - Halloville in fact marked the junction of the two German divisions. Realising the danger that this presented the commander of 708.Volks-Grenadier-Division ordered his men to prepare an immediate counterattack. As the German units were assembling just east of Halloville, they were struck by a combined American force made up of the 79th Division's 315th Infantry Regiment supported by tanks and tank destroyers. Caught completely by surprise the Grenadiers and their supporting assault guns of Sturmgeschütz-Abteilung 1708 were forced into a disorderly retreat, losing most of their armoured vehicles in the process. The official caption of this US Signal Corps photograph, taken on 17 November, is rather vague regarding the location, stating merely that it is near Halloville. However, I am almost certain that the church in the background is the l'église de Halloville which sits at the intersection of the Rue Saint-Georges and the Rue des Trois Fontaine and faces northwest towards Luneville. Although the spire of the present day church is significantly different from that seen in our photograph, a drawing of the church made in 1927 by Edmond Delorme, a noted architectural artist, is identical to that seen here. The damage to the building's roof is obvious and it may have undergone extensive restoration after the war. In all other respects the present day structure is identical and there is indeed today an open field to the east of the church. There is also an established wooded area to the south which would have helped to conceal the American advance which came from that direction. Depicted here is one of the Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer tank destroyers of 708. Volks-Grenadier-Division, which had 14 available in November 1944. This division was formed from the remnants of 708. Infanterie-Division as part of the German Army's 32nd recruitment, referred to as Welle - literally wave - conducted between September and October 1944. All such divisions contained a Panzerjäger-Abteilung made up of a company of towed anti-tank guns, another of towed anti-aircraft guns and a Sturmgeschütz company - invariably referred to in these battalions as an Abteilung - equipped with self-propelled tank destroyers. (NARA)





Photographed near Inden on 17 December 1944 with its new owners, this Sturmgeschütz III ausf G displays many interesting features including the non-standard wire brackets welded to the hull front and driver's side mudguard. The cast mantlet of the main gun was a standard feature of these vehicles from November 1943, however this example lacks the opening for the coaxial MG which was incorporated from October 1944. The gun travel lock, situated on the hull front directly below the main gun, was fitted from July 1944 and the presence of Zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste - here applied in the so called waffle pattern - was discontinued in production from September 1944. The addition of concrete to the front of the crew compartment was commonly seen on assault guns at this time on both the Western and Eastern Fronts and began to appear sometime in late 1944. Also of note is the shield for the Rundumsfeuer or remotely controlled machinegun - although the gun itself is missing. (NARA)



A Pzkw V Panther ausf G of 9.Panzer-Division photographed in Hünain on 28 December 1944. In November 1944, prior to the Ardennes Offensive, Panzer Regiment 33 of 9.Panzer-Division had been rebuilt with a Panther battalion of four companies - partly by absorbing Panzer-Abteilung 2105 - and a mixed or gemischtes Abteilung made up of two companies equipped with Pzkw IV tanks and two companies equipped with assault guns. This tank was photographed from several different angles and another view is shown and discussed in the illustration section on page 16. (NARA)



A Pzkw V Panther ausf G of I Abteilung, Panzer Regiment 16 of 116. Panzer-Division and a Pzkw IV ausf J from 6. Kompanie of the division's II Abteilung photographed in the town of Hotton, Belgium on Sunday, 26 December 1944. The regiment was part of a battle group which attempted to capture the town on the previous Thursday. The Panther is a late model vehicle evidenced by the raised fan cover on the rear deck just behind the radio antenna and the extended mantlet of the main gun. (NARA)



US soldiers examine a 3.7cm Flak 43 Mobelwagen near the town of Hosingen in northern Luxembourg in early 1945. Both 2. Panzer-Division and Panzer-Lehr-Division were involved in the fighting in this area and both had four of these vehicles on hand on when the Ardennes Offensive began on 16 December 1944. (NARA)

Both photographs on this page were taken in northern Luxembourg near the German border between Clervaux, Clerf, and Hosingen sometime after the Ardennes Offensive. This photograph shows a late production PzKw V Panther ausf G of I Abteilung, Panzer Regiment 33 of 9.Panzer-Division. Photographs of other tanks of this regiment's third company taken at the same time confirm that it was common practice to repeat the tank's number on the turret rear. (NARA)

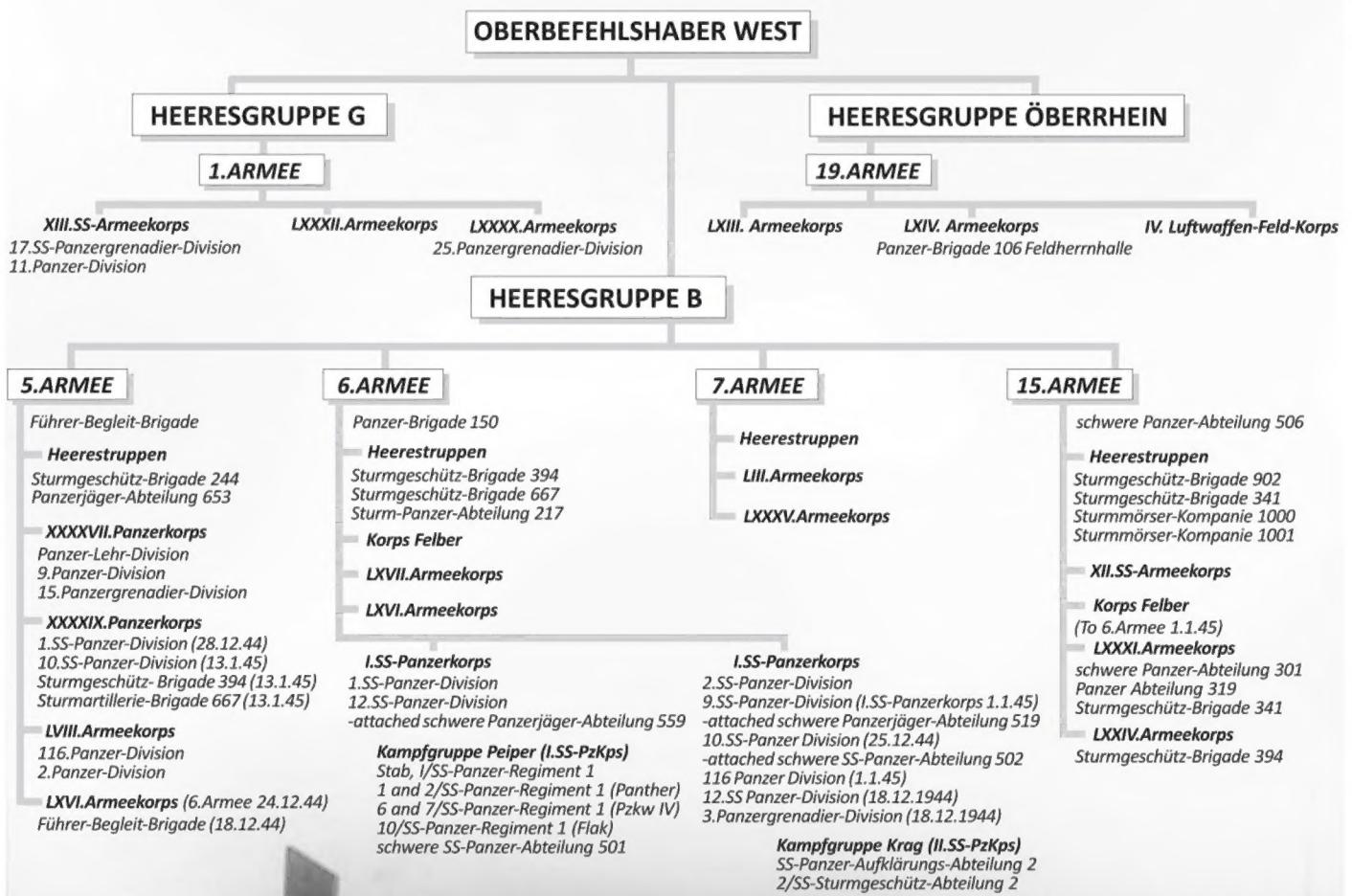


This photograph shows a Bergepanzer III recovery vehicle and although it has quite obviously been taken at the same time as the photograph shown above, there is no record of 9.Panzer-Division having any of these vehicles on hand. One possible candidate is 15.Panzer-Grenadier-Division which did operate in this area and had five of these vehicles on strength prior to the battle. (NARA)



THE GERMAN ARMOUR IN THE WEST, DECEMBER 1944

The German armed forces suffered almost three-quarters of a million casualties between June and November 1944 in the defensive fighting in Normandy and the subsequent withdrawal across France. Although the Army had been able to re-inforce many of its units with personnel from the Kriegsmarine, the Luftwaffe, by extending the call-up age to all males between 16 and 60 years of age and by conscripting men who had previously been exempt as essential to the war effort, these new recruits were poorly trained. Such measures did however, allow the Army to increase its manpower strength on the Western Front from less than half a million at the beginning of December to almost one and a half million by the middle of the month. Despite their best efforts, the Germans could not hope to match the numerical superiority of the Allies who still enjoyed a two-to-one advantage in artillery and a twenty-to-one advantage in tanks. Crucially, the British and Americans could call on almost 14,000 combat aircraft - while the Luftwaffe had almost been completely driven from the sky. By December 1944, the German Army in the West was organized into four separate Heeresgruppen or army groups. Three of these army groups - Heeresgruppe H, B and G - were commanded by Generalfeldmarschall von Rundstedt, while a fourth - Heeresgruppe Oberrhein - came under the command of Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler. The strongest of these army groups was Generalfeldmarschall Model's Heeresgruppe B which would provide the main strike force for the planned operation codenamed Wacht am Rhein - the Ardennes Offensive. Note that the order of battle shown below details armoured units only.



A Sturmgeschütz III ausf G of 3.Panzergrenadier-Division lies damaged and abandoned near Bastogne during the Ardennes Offensive. The division's unit insignia can be seen on the hull rear plate to the left of the vehicle's number. The practice of displaying the tactical number at the front and rear of the vehicle - as opposed to the sides - was common within this division. (NARA)



A Jagdpanzer IV/70(V) possibly from SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 1 of 1.SS-Panzer-Division photographed near the Belgium-Luxembourg border between Bastogne and Wiltz. The so-called ambush style of camouflage pattern is quite clearly shown here. (NARA)



A Volkswagen Kübelwagen type 82, also known as a Kfz 13, was a Belgian-made version of the German Kübelwagen. It was a light, hardy, and iconic vehicle, except for its lack of armor.

nicknamed the Kübelwagen, were very intact and popular among the Afrika Korps. These vehicles

Below: An SdKfz 250 of Panzerjäger-Abteilung 103, 3.Panzer-Division photographed in Samrée, Belgium, 25 kilometres south of Liège in January 1945. hull front, above the vehicle registration plate, shows the rank insignia of a motorised anti-tank company. (NARA). At left is shown the rank insignia of an Unteroffizier, the two pieces of horizontal braid denoting an officer candidate, with a metal gothic P identifying an anti-tank unit and the metal skull and crossbones badge of the Panzerjäger.



At left: A Pzkw IV ausf H knocked out in Belgium during the winter of 1944/45. Below: These vehicles were badly damaged and abandoned near the town of Inden, 25 kilometres northeast of Aachen, during the heavy fighting which took place there in late November 1944 - although they were actually photographed in 1947. Both are from 3.Panzergrenadier-Division, the Sturmgeschütz III belonging to 1.Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung 3 and the Jagdpanzer IV is from 1.Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 103. (NARA)





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Although a rare site in 1944, some of these Sdkfz 233 schwere Panzerspähwagen armoured cars soldiered on until the war's end. This vehicle from 2.Panzer-Division was photographed near Celles in December 1944 and is shown and discussed further in the illustration section on page 17. At the front of the hull, above the towing hook, can be seen the division's unit insignia and the tactical sign denoting an armoured car platoon. (NARA)



Photographed in January 1945, this Pzkw V Panther ausf G was used to test the efficacy of the 90mm anti-tank shell. Of interest are the three bolts welded towards the rear of the turret - presumably there is another set supporting the length of spare track. Note how the impact of the 90mm shells has caused the zimmerit anti-magnetic mine paste to fall away in large, rectangular segments. (NARA)





This photograph was taken on the Luxembourg-German border 20 kilometres southwest of Dossburg on 17 February 1945. The two Sturmgeschütz III ausf G assault guns may have been captured by the Americans. No identifying markings are visible, except some faint numbers on the hull of the first vehicle, possibly both Panzerjäger-Abteilung 311, 12th SS-Panzer-Division. The division had been fighting for this area and both were equipped with this type of vehicle.



This photograph was also taken on the Luxembourg-German border at Dossburg, some 20 kilometres to the north and just one week later on 28 February 1945. The vehicles nearest the camera are a Sturmgeschütz III ausf G and a Pzkw V Bergepanther recovery vehicle. (NARA)



An Sdkfz 10/4 2cm Flak 38 half-track photographed near Frauwüllesheim, 30 kilometres east of Aachen, on 28 February 1945. In the original print of this photograph it is possible to see that the gun, including the inside of the gun shield, has been painted in a camouflage pattern consisting of large patches of a darker colour. By this time many of these vehicles had semi-armoured cabs. (NARA). At left is the army anti-aircraft combat badge - or Heeres-Flak Kampfabzeichen - awarded to the crews of anti-aircraft guns and also searchlight and sound ranging troops. The award was based on a rather complicated points system and perhaps incongruously, actions against ground targets were not considered acceptable criteria. (Author's collection)



Photographed near Mödrath a suburb of Kerpen, some 15 kilometres east of Düren, in early March 1945, these two Sturmgeschütz III ausf G are almost certainly from 2 Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung 103 of 3. Panzergrenadier-Division which defended this area in late February and early March. The lead vehicle is also shown and discussed in the illustration section on page 18. (NARA)



Sdkfz 251/1 ausf D. Panzergrenadier Bataillon 2108, Panzer-Brigade 108. France, late 1944. This half-track and four others were captured by the US Army and converted to carry the T-34 Calliope rocket system. Both the number 2311 and name of a former crew member - Heinrich Hötger, killed in September 1944 - are repeated on the right side of the hull in exactly the same style. The Shark insignia was also carried at the rear on the right hand side mudguard.



3.7cm Flak 43 auf schwere Wehrmachtschlepper. Unknown unit. France, late 1944. Developed as a transport vehicle by Büssing-NAG in 1943, less than 1,000 of these vehicles were built in both an armoured and un-armoured version as shown here. Only the armoured version however was fitted with the 3.7cm anti-aircraft gun in production, the rest being field modifications. A large white letter G was painted inside the gun shield just above the barrel and probably indicated a Batterie.



Sturmgeschütz III auf G. Unit unknown. France, late 1944. Photographed near Thionville which was part of the Metz defensive system, this assault gun may have belonged to Panzerjäger-Abteilung 119 of 19.Volksgrenadier-Division.



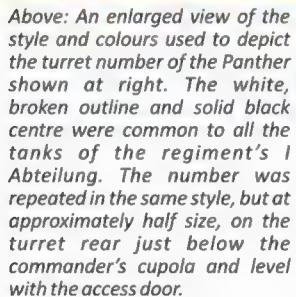
Sdkfz 251/6 ausf C. Unit uncertain. Belgium, December 1944. Photographed near Jodenville, 7 kilometres south-west of Bastogne, this command half-track may be from the Panzer-Lehr-Division which was operating there at that time. At left is an example of the method used to display the division's unit insignia or Truppenkennzeichen, in late 1944 and early 1945.



Right: The unit insignia of the Führer-Begleit-Brigade. It is uncertain which vehicles, if any, carried the marking during the fighting in the Ardennes.



Panzer IV/70(A). Führer-Begleit-Brigade. Belgium, December 1944. Part of this unit's armoured component was formed from II Abteilung, Panzer Regiment Grossdeutschland which had 38 of these vehicles on hand in December.



Above: An enlarged view of the style and colours used to depict the turret number of the Panther shown at right. The white, broken outline and solid black centre were common to all the tanks of the regiment's I Abteilung. The number was repeated in the same style, but at approximately half size, on the turret rear just below the commander's cupola and level with the access door.

Pzkw V Panther ausf G. 2 Kompanie, I Abteilung, SS-Panzer-Regiment 1. Belgium, December 1944. Knocked out at Stoumont about 15 kilometres west of Malmedy this tank was photographed from several different angles providing us with a good overall view of the camouflage scheme - indicative of Panthers produced by Daimler Benz in September 1944 - and markings.

Sdkfz 234/2 Puma. Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 2. Belgium, December 1944. During the Ardennes Offensive this unit had 10 of these vehicles on hand as part of Kampfgruppe von Böhm - the advance guard of 2.Panzer-Division - made up of this battalion and a number of Panthers. Cut off near Dinant fewer than 200 men escaped and all heavy equipment had to be abandoned with Hauptmann von Böhm and 148 of his men were taken prisoner.



Above: The unit insignia - or Truppenkenzeichen - of 2.Panzer-Division. Also of note is the Truppe number 8 painted in white on the mudguard between the first and second wheel. Apparently vehicles of this unit whose turret number ended in 1 had white numbers while those that ended in 2 used a dark colour, possibly black.



Pzkw V Panther ausf G. Panzer Regiment 33, 9.Panzer-Division. Belgium, December 1944. Abandoned on the outskirts of Humain, some 30 kilometres northwest of Bastogne, this tank was subsequently towed to the centre of the town and photographed from several different angles. The regiment had 57 Panthers available on 14 December and all were concentrated in II Abteilung. The number 80 almost certainly denotes the battalion's 8th company and may identify the company commander.

Sdkfz 233 (7.5 cm) Schwere Panzerspähwagen. 2.Panzer-Division. Belgium, late 1944. The first of these vehicles had been received by the division in May 1943 and it is possible that this heavy armoured car may be one of those. Given the date and location of the photograph on which our illustration is based it is likely that this vehicle has at least some connection to the Sdkfz 234/2 Puma of Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 2 attached to Kampfgruppe von Böhm during the Ardennes Offensive.



Sturmgeschütz III ausf G. Possibly 5 Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 61, 11.Panzer-Division. Germany, early 1945. The possible identification of this vehicle is based on the location at which it was photographed - in the Hunsrück area of western Germany - the style of marking and the assumption that any other possible candidates would have been unlikely to have fielded a 5th company. By January 1945 the battalion had lost all but two of its assault guns.

Above: The 2.Panzer-Division unit insignia and the tactical sign denoting an armoured car platoon.



Below: The unit insignia of the Führer-Grenadier-Brigade. The connection of this unit and the Führer-Begleit-Brigade with the Grossdeutschland division is emphasised in its design.



Sdkfz 251/17. Führer-Grenadier-Brigade. Luxembourg, December 1944. A number of these 2cm armed half-tracks and several assault guns were destroyed in an attack on the town of Heiderscheid approximately 20 kilometres south-east of Bastogne. The number 214 is somewhat speculative, only the first two digits being visible in our photograph.



Pzkfw VI Tiger I. Unit uncertain. Germany, Spring 1945. Abandoned between the towns of Detmold and Berlebeck - almost certainly on the Paderborner Strasse - this battered Tiger I may belong to Panzer Gruppe Paderborn. This unit was formed in March 1945 from the tanks of Panzer-Lehr und Ausbildungs-Abteilung Tiger, a training unit, which was able to field 15 Tiger I and 3 Tiger II tanks. By 12 April all the unit's vehicles had either been destroyed or abandoned.

Sturmgeschütz III ausf G. 2 Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 103, 3.Panzergrancadier-Division, Germany, March 1945. Photographed outside the village of Mödrath, approximately 15 kilometres west of Cologne, this assault gun unit can be identified by the distinctive method of displaying the vehicle's number at the front and rear of the hull.



Panzerbefehlswagen IV. Unit unknown. Germany, early 1945. This command tank, based on an early ausf G model, was captured almost intact by US troops. The name RITA painted on the main gun, although almost certainly coincidental, is reminiscent of the system used by II Abteilung of SS-Panzer Regiment 12 during the Normandy battles.



Pzkw V Panther ausf D. Unit uncertain. Germany, spring 1945. Photographed in the streets of Bamberg this early model Panther may belong to Panzer-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 35. The markings certainly resemble those used on other Panthers of the unit which was based in that area. Note the skull insignia painted on the rear stowage bin. The enlarged view is necessarily speculative as the image is unclear in the photograph on which our illustration is based.



Pzkw III. Panzer-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 35. Germany, spring 1945. Photographed in company with several other older tanks in the ruins of the battalion's workshop this vehicle is also shown and discussed on page 23.

Both photographs on this page show the same Panzer IV/70(A) in the streets of the small town of Mittelwihr, just north of Colmar, in France. This vehicle was knocked out when 7.Kompanie, Panzer Regiment 2, which had been attached to Panzer-Brigade 106 Feldherrnhalle, attempted to take the town in December 1944. The wire mesh skirt or Drahtgeflekt Schürzen is missing from the driver's side of the vehicle although the skirt for the other side is still in place. In the original print of both photographs it is possible to discern a solid black Balkenkreuz at the very top of the crew compartment, to the right of the gun mantlet. The ferocity of the fighting here, which lasted until January 1945 is evident in the destruction shown in these photographs and indeed only a small part of the town's medieval church and a wall at the entry of the village are all that remain today. (NARA)



Photographed in Baden on 7 March 1945, these two Sdkfz 251/1 ausf D half-tracks are being used as transport by their new owners, men of the US 5th Infantry Division. In the original print of this photograph a number beginning with 6 and possibly followed by a 3, is just visible to the rear of the Jerrycan on the hull side of the nearest vehicle. (NARA)



The official caption of this photograph states that this 15cm Panzerwerfer 42 auf Maultier was one of six captured near the village of Fussingen by units of the US 7th Armoured Division. The division swept through this area on 26 March advancing almost 25 kilometres reaching the Dillenburg-Wetzlar road, approximately 60 kilometres north of Frankfurt, by the evening of the next day. Although it is not possible to identify the unit, 16.Volks-Werfer-Brigade had been attached to LXVI. Armmekorps, the closest German formation to 7th Armoured Division's advance, since December 1944 when the brigade had 12 of these vehicles on hand and although the brigade staff had been transferred further north on 23 March, some units may still have been in the area. (NARA)



This Pzkw V Panther ausf G was photographed in the town of Kelberg, approximately 30 kilometres west of Koblenz on 11 March 1945. The town was captured on 3 March by units of the US 11th Armoured Division and according to the American account, was defended by six German tanks including one Tiger II. In early March, General von Manteuffel's 5.Panzerarmee was retreating through this area and this Panther may have belonged to either 2.Panzer-Division, 9.Panzer-Division or 3.Panzergrenadier-Division. The only unit on the Western Front equipped with the Tiger II at this time, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 506, was however fighting much further to the north. (NARA)



At left: A page from the Pantherfibl, an instruction manual produced for trainee Panther crews which imparted technical information in an often light hearted manner. Here a gunner is presenting the tank's 7.5cm gun to Saint Barbara, the patron saint of the artillery. Also shown is the Panzer Marksman's badge which was normally reserved for parades and worn with a corded lanyard at the right shoulder. At the rear is the Metz campaign cuff title instituted on 24 October 1944 and awarded to any soldier who had served for at least seven days with Kampfgruppe Siegroth, which had defended the city, or was wounded during the siege. (Author's collection)

Photographed in Haiger east of Cologne on 29 March 1945, this Pzkw V Panther ausf G was part of an ad hoc force coordinated by the headquarters of General Bayerlein's LIII Corps and was made up from parts of 176.Infanterie-Division, 3.Panzergrenadier-Division and Panzer-Lehr-Division - the latter having only ten of these tanks on hand at the time. (NARA)





A 7.5 cm Pak (Panzerabwehrkanone) 40, dug in and heavily camouflaged, sighted to cover a flat, open field. These guns were capable of engaging and destroying Allied tanks at ranges of up to 1,800 metres and could be easily concealed, as shown here. The German army relied heavily on these weapons and during the surge in armament production that took place between January and September 1944, over 7,000 were allocated to units. Note that a considerable amount of whitewash camouflage has been applied to the gun's body, which is now dead arm, although it is difficult to be certain, it appears that the gun's wheels have been removed. (NARA)

Although it is generally agreed that this Sturmgeschütz IV assault gun was knocked out by units of the US 776th Tank Destroyer Battalion, there is some controversy regarding the date and the location of this photograph with some sources giving January 1945 near Rimling and others, 9 March near Helfengerhoff. The official caption agrees with the March date but gives Brandelfengerhoff as the location. The date of this photograph is plainly not January, when the ground was covered in snow. On 2 March, in support of the US 200th Division, the battalion was near Bitche in France less than 10 kilometres from the German border with US intelligence reports placing 17.SS-Panzergrenadier-Division less than a kilometre away at Schorbach. A few kilometres to the north, across the German border there are a multitude of towns named in the Helfengerhoff-Brandelfengerhoff style - although I have not been able to locate an exact match anywhere in Germany. The only other unit thought to have had any serviceable Sturmgeschütz IV at this time, Panzer Regiment 3 of 2.Panzer-Division, was far to the north near Wittlich. This would strongly suggest that this vehicle - named Kunigunde, a girl's name - did belong to SS-Panzerjäger-Abteilung 17. (NARA)





Both photographs on this page depict Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer tank destroyers, almost certainly from the same unit, knocked out near the fortress town of Bitche, some 40 kilometres southeast of Saarbrücken in early March 1945. Although there are no identifying markings on either vehicle, the only unit close to the town at that time equipped with the Hetzer was the Sturmgeschütz company of Panzerjäger-Abteilung(mot) 1316 from 16.Volks-Grenadier-Division, which had originally been issued with 14 of these diminutive tank destroyers in early December. The factory applied camouflage is typical of vehicles manufactured by the Boemisch-Mährische Maschinenfabrik works and visible in the original print of this photograph, just to the left of the damaged Notek headlight is a matte black rectangle which, from October 1944, was painted on the hull in an effort to decoy enemy gunners away from the drivers visor and vision block. (NARA)

Photographed in Bamberg, inside the very heavily damaged workshop of Panzer- Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Abteilung 35, can be seen a PzkV Panther ausf D, a PzkIV ausf G and - closest to the camera - an early PzkIII which is too badly damaged to categorize accurately. Interestingly the latter is fitted with a turret from a Tauchpanzer - tanks which were modified to run underwater - identified by the flange around the bottom edge of the turret. This vehicle is also shown in the illustration section on page 18. This battalion was the training and replacement unit of Panzer Regiment 35 of 4.Panzer-Division and attempted to defend the town of Bamberg from approaching US units with veteran tanks such as these in April 1945. (NARA)



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Panzerjäger V Jagdpanther of schwere Panzerjäger-Abteilung 654 knocked out in one of the open fields around Hargarten, some 25 kilometres north of Bitburg. This battalion was under the direct control of Heeresgruppe G during the Nordwind operation and suffered heavy casualties. By February 1945, the battalion had been reduced to six serviceable tank destroyers. (NARA)

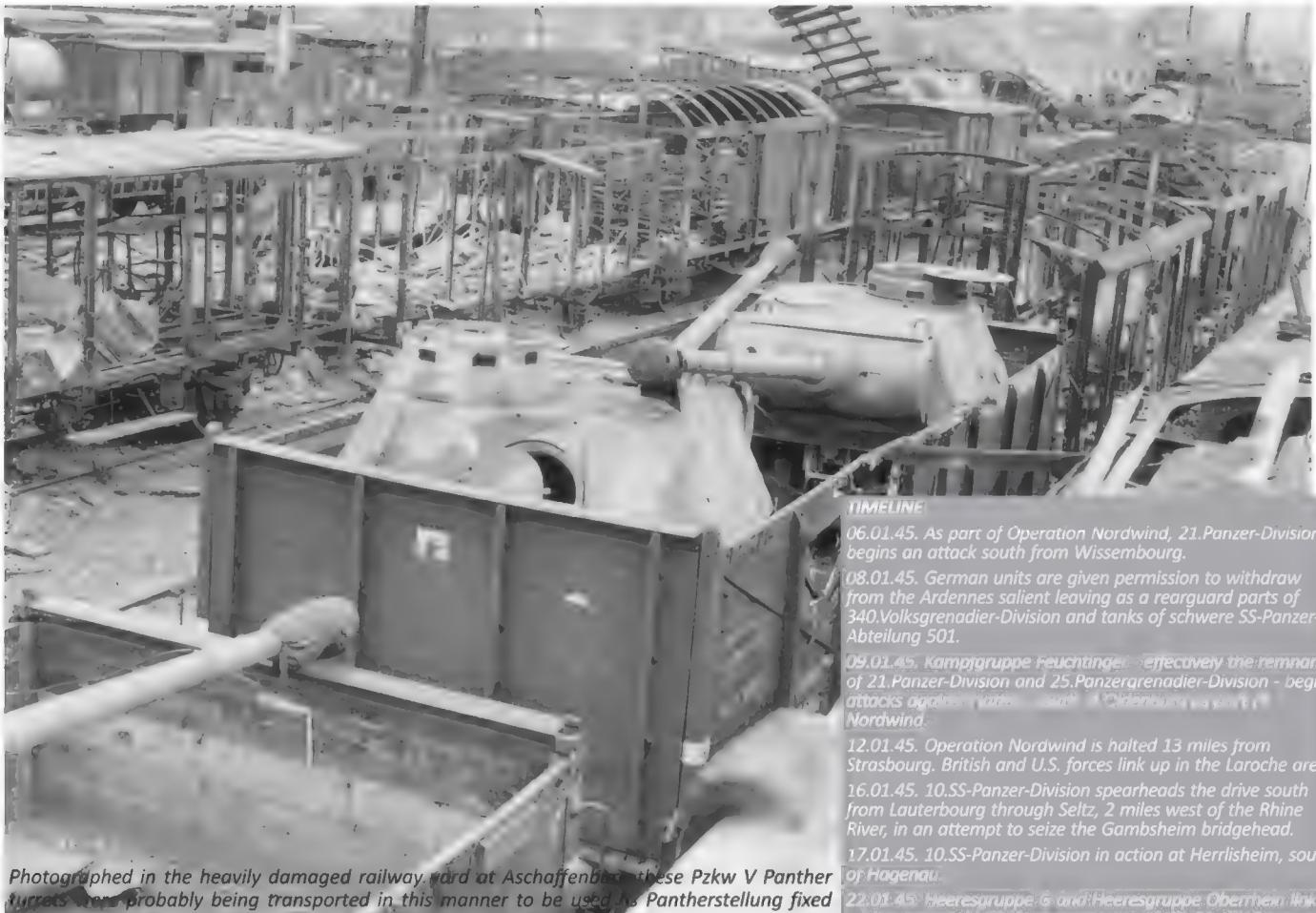


An abandoned PzkW V Panther ausf A is used as cover by soldiers of the US 4th Cavalry Group on 2 March 1945. The official caption gives the location as Flesch, however I have been unable to locate a similarly named town in western Germany and this may in fact be Frechen just outside Cologne which was, according to the published US 12th Army Group situation map for 2 March, right on the front line. If the German dispositions recorded on the map are correct, this tank is probably from Panzer Regiment 33 of 9.Panzer-Division. (NARA)



This PzkW V Panther ausf G from Panzer Regiment 15 of 11.Panzer-Division was photographed near Fernegierscheid in early April 1945. This division was part of the counterattack against the Remagen bridgehead which began on 23 March. In mid March, prior to the fighting around Remagen, the division reported that its armoured strength had been reduced to 33 of these Panther tanks together with 17 PzkW IV tanks and 6 assault guns. The town of Fernegierscheid is approximately 20 kilometres northeast of Remagen. (NARA)





Photographed in the heavily damaged railway yard at Aschaffenburg, these Pzkw V Panther turrets were probably being transported in this manner to be used in Pantherstellung fixed emplacements. The turret would be mounted on the purpose built Stahlunterstand, basically a metal bunker, which was then buried. Note the elaborate camouflage pattern on the nearest turret. This town in Bavaria was the scene of a particularly savage battle between 28 March and 3 April 1945. The defence was undertaken by various ad hoc units made up from men of the Volkssturm and Waffen-SS. (NARA)



A Panzer IV/70(A) sits by the roadside in Ober-Bessenbach, less than 5 kilometres southwest of Aschaffenburg. This photograph was taken on the morning of 1 April 1945, only hours after the town was captured. (NARA)

TIMELINE

- 06.01.45. As part of Operation Nordwind, 21.Panzer-Division begins an attack south from Wissembourg.
- 08.01.45. German units are given permission to withdraw from the Ardennes salient leaving as a rearguard parts of 340.Volksgrenadier-Division and tanks of schwere SS-Panzer-Abteilung 501.
- 09.01.45. Kampfgruppe Hechlinger - recovering the remnants of 21.Panzer-Division and 25.Panzergrenadier-Division - begin attacks against the British in the Lorraine area.
- 12.01.45. Operation Nordwind is halted 13 miles from Strasbourg. British and U.S. forces link up in the Laroche area.
- 16.01.45. 10.SS-Panzer-Division spearheads the drive south from Lauterbourg through Seltz, 2 miles west of the Rhine River, in an attempt to seize the Gamsheim bridgehead.
- 17.01.45. 10.SS-Panzer-Division in action at Herrlisheim, south of Haguenau.
- 22.01.45. Heeresgruppe G and Heeresgruppe Obermeier link up but are unable to force crossing of the Moder River.
- 28.01.45. The last German units withdraw from the Ardennes salient.
- 04.02.45. The last German troops leave Belgium.
- 07.02.45. The Germans destroy the floodgates in the Ruhr flooding the area West of Cologne and preventing the use of assault bridges.
- 08.02.45. British and Canadian troops launch an offensive into the Reichswald.
- 09.02.45. The last Rhine bridge is destroyed in the Colmar Pocket after much of 19.Arme had been evacuated.
- 10.02.45. US units capture the last of the Ruhr dams.
- 12.02.45. British and Canadian troops capture Cleve.
- 17.02.45. The US 3rd Army breaks through the Siegfried Line and advances into Germany.
- 23.02.45. US 9th Army attacks from the Roer bridgehead towards the Hürten Forest but is bogged down in savage fighting.
- 28.02.45. US units in the Hürten Forest break through near Erkelenz west of Cologne at great cost.
- 06.03.45. Cologne surrenders.
- 07.03.45. The Rhine bridge at Remagen captured intact.
- 09.03.45. The British capture the Ruhr bridge at Minden on the Rhine.
- 10.03.45. Generalfeldmarschall Kesselring replaces von Rundstedt as Oberbefehlshaber West.
- 12.02.45. Kampfgruppe Dunker - formed from Feld-Ersatz-Bataillon 3 and stragglers from 116.Panzer-Division - attempts to defend Beckum with four Tigers rendered combatable in lack of fuel.
- 14.03.45. US 3rd Army crosses the Moselle.
- 15.03.45. Attempts to expand the Remagen bridgehead fail.
- 17.03.45. The Remagen bridge collapses.
- 20.03.45. Saarbrücken falls.
- 21.03.45. US units advance from Remagen toward Siegburg.
- 22.03.45. Units of the US 3rd Army cross the Rhine at Oppenheim south of Mainz against ineffective German resistance.
- 23.03.45. British and Canadian units begin their assault
- 24.03.45. The British capture the Rhine bridge at Bonn fails. The British launch operation Plunder. US troops capture Speyer and Ludwigshafen.
- 25.03.45. British troops capture Wesel after an aerial bombardment almost completely destroys the town.



Photographed in Osterode on 12 April 1945, this PzKw VI Tiger II of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507 has been damaged by an anti-tank round - the point of impact being visible on the turret side just behind the spare tracks. Given the location and date, this is probably one of the 3. Kompanie Tigers attached to SS-Panzer Brigade Westfalen between 30 March and 11 April 1945. Although US sources suggest that this tank was knocked out by a 90mm round it is difficult to envisage any large weapon being fired in the narrow confines of this street - Dörgerstrasse. At least one source (Schneider) states that this vehicle had broken down outside the Gasthof due to track damage and was abandoned there. However, in the following days the tank was photographed from several angles and in all photos the tracks appear intact. (NARA)



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carrying vehicles
had original



Photographed just outside the town of Osterode am Harz, northeast of Kassel on 15 April 1945, this PzKw VI Tiger II is quite probably the last tank of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507, the partner of the Tiger shown at the top of page 27 which was photographed in the centre of the town. (NARA)

TANKS

SDM 42. The remaining unbroken types of assault gun SdKfz managed to hold the frontiers in front of the British 1st Armoured Division at Bremervörde. A command staff of 1000 Germans were captured without resistance at Witten. From 17–18 April, British tanks advanced through the towns of Witten, Herford, Minden, Lübbecke, Münster, Detmold, Bad Salzuflen, Lünen, Unna, and Düsseldorf. American units advanced like lightning. The British captured Gelsenkirchen and Bottrop on 19 April. A single Tiger of schwere Panzer Abteilung 507, the survivor of the British 1st Royal Tank Regiment, became known as the 'Devil on wheels' because it had been to hell and back.

SDM 42. The US 82nd Airborne Division takes Hamminkeln.

SDM 42. Elements of Panzer-Grenadier Division 1200 made their way south of Hamminkeln, capturing 1200 who had previously been captured from French units in combat with the British 1st Parachute Brigade. The British 1st Parachute Brigade had been fighting for Hamminkeln since 17 April.

SDM 42. The British 1st Parachute Brigade capture Hamminkeln.

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SDM 42. The British 1st Parachute Brigade capture Hamminkeln.

SDM 42. A single Tiger tank from schwere Panzer-Abteilung 507 had managed to reach a company of Sherman tanks in Hamminkeln. It remained there until 20 April, when it returned to the place it commanded. General Helmuth Lemke, who commanded Hamminkeln with von Schwerdt, SDM 42. The British 1st Parachute Brigade.

SDM 42. General Helmke becomes Hamminkeln's last city and surrenders to the British 1st Parachute Brigade. Hamminkeln falls into British hands.

SDM 42. Armored cars from Hamminkeln capture the town. Hamminkeln is now controlled by German troops. In Hamminkeln, the British 1st Parachute Brigade captures the town.

SDM 42. The British 1st Parachute Brigade captures Hamminkeln.

SDM 42. The British 1st Parachute Brigade captures Hamminkeln.



INSIGNIA OF THE PANZER ELITE

and the 1990s. Although the U.S. Treasury's work has been to encourage a more market-based approach to the economy, it has also been to defend the dollar's position as the world's primary reserve currency. The U.S. government's decision to allow the dollar to appreciate against the yen in 1985, for example, was aimed at helping the U.S. balance of payments deficit. This decision was part of the so-called Plaza Accord, which was signed by the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and Italy. The accord was designed to reduce the U.S. trade deficit by making the dollar less expensive relative to other currencies. The U.S. government's decision to allow the dollar to appreciate against the yen in 1985, for example, was aimed at helping the U.S. balance of payments deficit. This decision was part of the so-called Plaza Accord, which was signed by the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, West Germany, and Italy. The accord was designed to reduce the U.S. trade deficit by making the dollar less expensive relative to other currencies.



At right: An Sdkfz 251 of 116.Panzer-Division passes a knocked out M10 tank destroyer during the fighting of late 1944. The division's famous Windhund, or greyhound, insignia can be clearly seen on the front of the vehicle. Below that is the tactical symbol denoting a tank platoon. Just visible on the band of the cap worn by the Officer at the centre of the photograph, is the Windhund badge worn by many members of the division. Also shown is the collar tab worn by Panzer troops and a variant of the Windhund cap badge. The latter was produced in several versions including one with a pin back.



An assortment of Pzkw III tanks, including three ausf N models closest to the camera, all with coatings of zimmerit paste. These tanks are from Panzer-Abteilung Norwegen based in Oslo, Norway. This unit was originally formed from the 2nd and 3rd companies of I Abteilung, Panzer Regiment 9 of 25.Panzer-Division in September 1943. According to the official caption to this photograph, the battalion had 71 tanks on hand at the time of the German surrender. (NARA)



Photographed in the last days of the war, this Sdkfz 251/16 ausf D Flampanzerwagen of 16.Panzer-Division is being used to transport refugees towards the American lines. This division retreated through Poland into Czechoslovakia and in the confused fighting of May 1945, some elements managed to reach the American lines. The division's unit insignia - probably in yellow - and the tactical symbol denoting a tank company - almost certainly in white - can be seen above and to the right of the vehicle's registration number. (NARA)



General der Panzertruppen Maximilian Freiberr von Edelsheim, commander of XXXXVIII Panzerkorps and officers of his staff, return to the east bank of the Elbe after receiving surrender terms from the Chief of Staff of the US 9th Army. Of note is the corps unit insignia painted on the side of the car and the notation - partly obscured - which reads: Gen.Kom XXXXVIII Pz Kps. This type of detailed identification - although obviously detrimental to security - was commonly seen late in the war and was not restricted to command or rear area vehicles. The small metal flag in front of the headlight also identifies a corps command. (NARA)

Officers of 116.Panzer-Division taken prisoner at Menden, south of Hamm, by troops of the US 7th Armoured Division including the division's Operations Officer, Oberst Heinz-Günther Guderian wearing the black uniform of the Panzer troops. The son of the famous Generaloberst Heinz Wilhelm Guderian, he served throughout the conflict being wounded twice during the 1940 French campaign. He survived the war and served as Inspector of Armoured troops - the same position held by his father - in the Bundeswehr before retiring in 1974. (NARA)



CLAUSEWITZ, THE LAST PANZER DIVISION

Ordered into existence on 4 April 1945, barely five weeks before the end of the war, Panzer-Division Clausewitz was typical of the ad-hoc formations created in the last months of the conflict. Incredibly, the division was expected to be ready for operations by 8 April and was originally to be formed from elements of a Panzer replacement unit and an anti-tank battalion from Panzergrenadier-Division Grossdeutschland with units of the 323.Infanterie-Division. However, both the armour and infantry units were engaged at the front and could not be spared. On 6 April, new orders were issued stating that Panzer-Division Clausewitz would be organised from remnants of various units. These would eventually include Panzer-Division Holstein, 233.Reserve-Panzer-Division and the tanks of the Schiess-Schule Putlos. Although the new division lacked transport and sufficient numbers of armoured vehicles, many of its personnel were combat veterans or instructors and the division's commander, Generalmajor Martin Unrein, was a highly experienced and competent officer. The division's first engagement took place on 12 April 1945, when tanks and infantry stopped a strong British attack near the town of Uelzen. Fighting continuously, by the last days of April 1945, the division had been reduced to a battle group of an undersized infantry regiment and barely a company of tanks. During its brief existence, three of the division's men - Major Gustav Walle, Leutnant Friedrich Anding and Obergefreiter Johann Stützle, all of Panzerjäger-Abteilung Grossdeutschland, were either nominated for, or awarded the Knight's Cross.

Stab, Panzer-Division Clausewitz

Formed from the headquarters staff of Panzer-Division Holstein which had been almost completely destroyed in the fighting in Pomerania in March 1945.

Begleitkompanie (mot) Clausewitz

Nachrichten Kompanie Clausewitz

Formed from Signals personnel seconded from Heeresgruppe H

Nachrichten Abteilung 18

Formed from personnel seconded from 18.Panzergrenadier-Division

Panzer Pionier Bataillon

Formed from Panzer Pionier Bataillon 144 of Panzer-Division Holstein

Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung Elbe

Stabs Begleitkompanie (mot)

Panzerspähwagen Kompanie

Panzer Aufklärungs Kompanie (gep)

On 17 April the battalion was able to report that 4 Sdkfz 250/8, 24 Sdkfz 250/9, 6 Sdkfz 221, 2 Sdkfz 222, 2 Sdkfz 234/1 and 2 Sdkfz 234/4 vehicles were available.

Panzerjäger-Abteilung Grossdeutschland

Panzerjäger Kompanie

Panzerjäger Kompanie

Panzerjäger Kompanie

Versorgungs Kompanie

Formed from two companies of the GD Division and one company of Panzer-Abteilung Potsdam. All companies were equipped with assault guns. At one time the battalion had a motorised Begleitkompanie attached to the headquarters.

Panzer Aufklärungs Abteilung Doering

Panzerjäger-Abteilung 661

Heeres Flak Artillerie Abteilung 321

It is probable that the headquarters only was attached to the division

Panzer Regiment (gemischtes)

Stab, Panzer-Brigade 106

Stabs Begleitkompanie

Panzer-Abteilung 2106

Including parts of 1.Kompanie, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 93. Unrein also claimed that there were a number of Pzkw III on hand.

Panzerkompanie

Sturmgeschütz IV (A report of 1.4.45 gives Pzkw V)

Panzerkompanie (gemischtes)

Pzkw IV and Jagdpanzer IV (A report of 1.4.45 gives Pzkw IV/70)

Versorgungs Kompanie

II Abteilung (gemischtes), Panzer-Regiment Feldherrnhalle

Stabskompanie

Panzergrenadier Kompanie (gep)

Panzergrenadier Kompanie (gep)

Panzergrenadier Kompanie (gep)

Versorgungs Kompanie

Panzer-Abteilung Putlos

Stabskompanie

Panzerkompanie (gemischtes)

Panzerkompanie (gemischtes)

Panzergrenadier Kompanie (gep)

Versorgungs Kompanie (mot)

On 13 April, this unit - formed from the gunnery school at Putlos - joined the division. On the following day it reported that the battalion was able to field 12 Pzkw V Panther and Pzkw VI Tiger tanks - the breakdown is not clear - 7 Pzkw IV, 4 Panzer IV/70 and 1 Jagdpanzer IV vehicle and 1 Sturmgeschütz. On 17 April it was incorporated into Kampfgruppe Benningsen and reported that 7 Pzkw IV, 12 Pzkw V Panther, 2 Pzkw VI Tiger, 4 Pzkw IV/70, 1 Jagdpanzer IV, 1 Sturmgeschütz, 2 sIG self-propelled guns, 3 heavy anti-tank guns, 9 Sdkfz 250 and 10 Sdkfz 251 vehicles were on hand.

Panzer-Artillerie-Abteilung 144

Stabsbatterie

Batterie - leFH (mot)

Batterie - leFH (mot)

Batterie - leFH (mot)

Batterie - sFH (mot)

This unit was formed from the remnants of the artillery assets of Panzer-Division Holstein and one battery of light field howitzers seconded from 233. Panzer-Division. On 15 April the battalion was reported as still being in transit to the division.

Panzergrenadier Regt Feldherrnhalle 1

Regiments Stab

Begleitkompanie

Pionier Kompanie

I Abteilung

Stabsbegleit Kompanie

II Abteilung

PzGr Kompanie

As for I Abteilung

PzGr Kompanie

III Abteilung

PzGr Kompanie

As for I Abteilung

Panzergrenadier Regt Feldherrnhalle 2

Regiments Stab

Stabs Kompanie

PzGr Kompanie

Panzergrenadier Regiment 42

Regiments Stab

Panzerjäger Kompanie

I Abteilung

Stabs Kompanie

PzGr Kompanie

PzGr Kompanie

PzGr Kompanie

PzGr Kompanie

The division's original complement of armoured infantry was provided by Panzergrenadier-Ersatz und Ausbildungs-Regiment Feldherrnhalle which was officially attached on 6 April 1945. A training and replacement unit, it comprised three battalions totally 3,321 men and despite its title, had no transport for its Panzergrenadier companies which were in effect ordinary infantry units. It would appear that soon after joining the division, the regiment was reduced from three to two battalions with the surplus personnel forming a second regiment. As can be seen above, the regiments were then referred to as Feldherrnhalle 1 and 2 and this is first noted in a report of 12 April 1945. Confusingly, reports for 17 and 28 April both show Feldherrnhalle 1 as having three battalions, the latter report referring to "I/I/Panzergrenadier Ers u Aus Regt Feldherrnhalle". It is likely that the re-organisation was indeed carried out - as required by the new establishments created on 25 March - but that as replacements arrived, as they continued to do until at least 17 April, a new battalion was formed. Attached to the division on 6 April 1945, Panzergrenadier Regiment 42 was formed from the remnants of 233.Panzer-Division, a reserve formation. Motorised transport was provided for the Panzerjäger Kompanie only. It should be remembered that units were added to the division as they arrived and that some never did. Also, battle casualties and constant re-organisations meant that the order of battle changed on an almost daily basis. The table shown above therefore represents the division in mid-April 1945.

Below: Sdkfz 251/22, 11.Panzer-Division, Germany, Spring 1945. These vehicles were intended to replace Sdkfz 251/9 half-tracks in the reconnaissance units of armoured divisions and the heavy weapons companies of Panzergrenadier battalions.



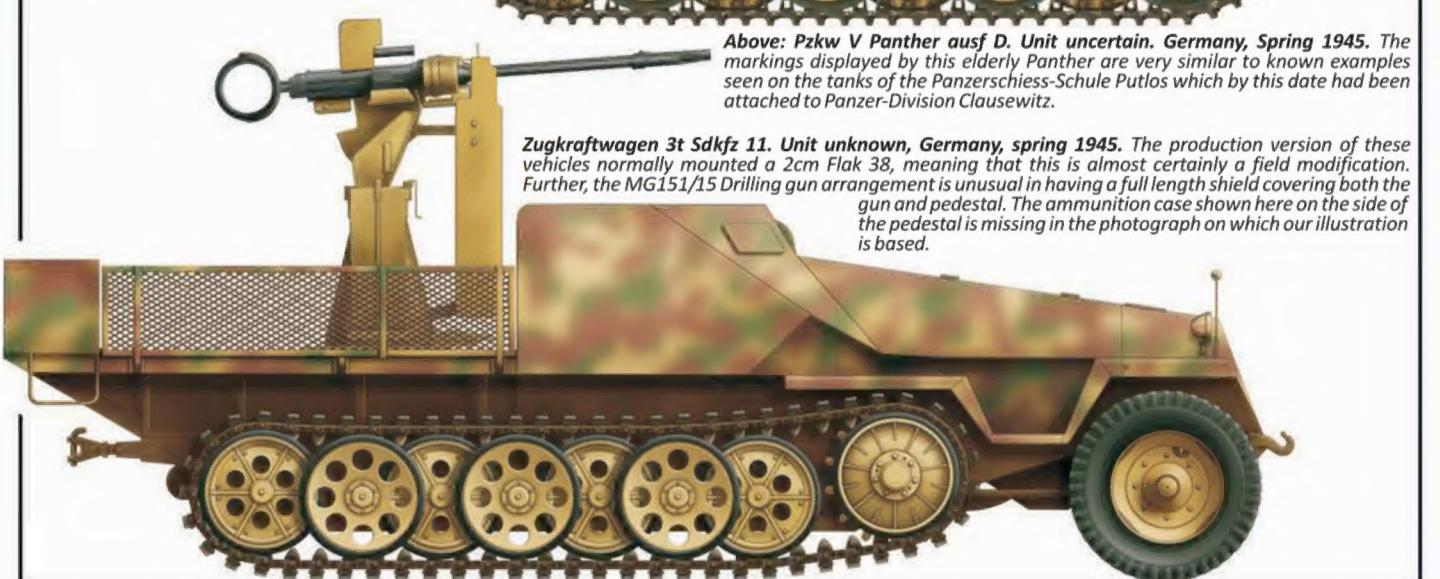
Above: In addition to factory produced models mounting the 7.5cm Pak 40 anti-tank gun, conversion sets for the same armament were issued to units from late 1944 with the order that all Sdkfz 251/9 vehicles were to be modified. Many units however continued to refer to the converted half-tracks by their original designation and the 16 that this division reported as being available on 30 December may have been armed with the new gun. At far right is a rear view of the vehicle and an enlarged example of the division's unit insignia.



Above: Sdkfz 234/1. Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 125, 25.Panzergrenadier-Division. Germany, Spring 1945. At far left is the division's unit insignia. The hard edge style of camouflage was commonly seen on these late production armoured cars.



Above: A rear view of the vehicle depicted at right showing the placement of the tank's number on the turret rear.



Above: Pzkfw V Panther ausf D. Unit uncertain. Germany, Spring 1945. The markings displayed by this elderly Panther are very similar to known examples seen on the tanks of the Panzerschiess-Schule Putlos which by this date had been attached to Panzer-Division Clausewitz.

Zugkraftwagen 3t Sdkfz 11. Unit unknown, Germany, spring 1945. The production version of these vehicles normally mounted a 2cm Flak 38, meaning that this is almost certainly a field modification. Further, the MG151/15 Drilling gun arrangement is unusual in having a full length shield covering both the gun and pedestal. The ammunition case shown here on the side of the pedestal is missing in the photograph on which our illustration is based.